

“Should the Church Give Showers to Unwed Mothers?”

Our church is wonderful and loving. Christ centered with a Godly pastor. Within the past two years we have had several baby showers for unwed mothers. All of their parents are actively involved in our church but not all of the girls. Are we right in honoring these unwed mothers with baby showers within the church setting? I want to help them but what message is this sending to the young people in our church?

I fully understand your conundrum. This question became intensely personal in our family when a beloved niece became an unwed mother. Her Christ-following mother, distraught over her daughter's sexual sin and ashamed by what she perceived to be the implications of her own mothering, had a very memorable conversation with God soon after her daughter confessed she was pregnant.

“What am I supposed to do with this, Lord?” she complained. “I suppose you want me to give her a *shower??!!!!??*”

Then, in her spirit, she heard words of unexpected compassion: *“Every child should be welcomed and valued.”*

Whoa. Suddenly, she realized that the Lord's heart was to celebrate the baby, the circumstances of whose conception were not her fault. She and some dear friends from church held a baby shower, and this young unwed mother experienced her first up-close-and-personal taste of God's grace. Jesus' church provided everything the baby needed, despite how the baby came to be in the first place.

The welcomed, celebrated, and well-loved baby has grown into a little girl who has never once wondered if she is loved. She swims in an ocean of family love. And her grandmother pours truth into her through song and story about Jesus' love for

her.

This young woman became a great mother, married a wonderful young man, has had two more children, and guess what? In part because of her experience of church as a source of grace and compassion, the family is starting to attend one nearby.

I'm so glad you asked, so I can tell you this great story with such a happy ending.

Warmly,
Sue Bohlin

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“I Believe Every Bad Thing I Hear”

I am the person who unfortunately believes the bad things anyone tells them. I am also the person who will take one minute detail and suddenly base that as evidence of something that I am.

This all started about 4 years ago during worship. The pastor was singing, “Who the Son sets free is free indeed,” instead I heard, “Who the devil sets free is free indeed.” I ignored it, but then I started thinking, “You are hearing that because you were never a child of God.” And I believed it. I believed that I was predestined for hell and that it must have been because I committed the sin of blasphemy. This took a lot of willpower to not let it take over my life. It came to the point of me only believing that I was only sincere in my life when it came to evil things, that that was who I really was and not a child of God. I am still unsure till this day which is true, and

which is a lie.

Unfortunately I walked away from God, and now that I am trying to come back I feel like I can't. In school, I hang around with a lot of homosexual friends. I never thought anything of it until a friend of mine asked all of us who are straight, "Which of us do you think is gay?" and being the way I am, I immediately thought, "Am I?" And I am now battling over my sexuality. I know that it's wrong, and I never had any desire for a woman before, but after that conversation with those friends, I find myself attempting to think and act like a lesbian. It's horrible, but I don't know how to stop it.

Aside from the homosexuality feeling, I feel as though I am a phony, that my walk with God is fake. Everyone always says that "faith isn't mental, it's in your heart and what your spirit knows." But I feel like my heart is totally hard towards God and that no matter how many times I will say, "Lord make me believe, or Lord please deliver me of all of this garbage," that he will never listen because my heart is truly not in it. I don't know if it's a matter of faith or a matter of my emotions, but I don't know how to separate the two and just believe and believe that God can deliver me and forgive me for all of the sins that I've done. I try to pray and read the bible, but I go to sleep feeling worse off than I did before. I don't know how to fix it. I am in a depression that I'm honestly not sure I can get out of.

I don't know where to turn. I am trying to turn to God, but the whole issue of sincerity and insincerity is getting to me and it's prohibiting me from allowing God to really save me. I don't want to be evil or unsaved or predestined for hell. But I don't know how to take myself out of the equation and focus on God and him healing me.

Why can't he just ignore all of my sins and my unbelief and my insincere feelings and just show me he is God and change me?!?!?

I am so glad you wrote to us! I am so sorry for this place you find yourself. It has to be really hard to be you, at least right now. But I do have an observation and a couple of suggestions I think may help.

The Bible says, "As a man thinks in his heart, so is he" (Prov. 23:7). The beliefs you have about yourself and "the way you are," constitute a filter through which you interpret everything you see and hear. From what you describe, your "flesh filter" (flesh is the human part of us that operates apart from the Spirit of God; it's broken and unredeemable, which is why it needs to be crucified with Christ) is exceptionally susceptible to suggestion. You easily believe things whether they are true or not simply because the thought is in your head. It doesn't matter if it came from your own heart or from the outside as a spiritual attack, your filter tags all thoughts as valid and true. (Which is also a problem in college, where you hear things that are not true all the time but you don't know they're not true!)

Where does that come from?

From not being grounded in truth. You don't know what is true, so you can't identify what is a lie. Lots of people try to make faith a warm fuzzy emotion of the heart, but that's not the kind of biblical faith Jesus called us to. Faith is radical trust based on evidence that God is trustworthy. That's one reason Jesus calls us to love God with our minds: we need to actively engage with the evidence for His existence and evidence of His love for us. And that's why your prayers, as well-intentioned as they are, aren't being answered. God doesn't want you to passively sit back and let Him do all the work, because He will not do for us what He calls us to do for ourselves. Asking Him to make you believe is like showing up on the _____ campus and expecting the school to educate you while you stay in your room without going to class or studying. Does that make sense?

Making
Your Faith
Your Own



TERESA TURNER
VINING

I want to recommend an excellent resource to you that will help build your faith by wrestling with the truth that will allow your faith to rest on the fact that it's TRUE and not some warm fuzzy feeling. Teresa Vining wrote *Making Your Faith Your Own* after having some similar struggles to yours while she was in college.

www.ccel.us/makingyrfaith.toc.html and

www.amazon.com/Making-Your-Faith-Own-Guidebook/dp/0830823263/

Concerning your struggle with your sexual identity: it's important that you speak the truth to yourself. God made you a female, designed to connect meaningfully with both women and men in different ways. The erotic/romantic connection is intended to be strictly between men and women. You are not a lesbian, you are being tempted with same-sex feelings that are coming from outside you (spiritual warfare). They may be strong, but they are not true. Truth is reality as God sees it, and He made you a heterosexual woman. This is the same line of thinking (helping people see and commit to what is true rather than their feelings) that we teach in the [ministry](#) I serve with that helps same-sex-attracted people deal with unwanted homosexuality.

I hope you find this helpful. I send this with a prayer that you will know that God loves you, He is for you, and there is hope for getting out of this dark place as you walk into His light.

Warmly,
Sue Bohlin

“Should My Husband Get Baptized If He Still Wants to Get Drunk?”

My husband is now a newly born again believer and wants to get baptized. My concern is that even though he has asked Jesus to be his savior and wants to get baptized, he won't give up getting drunk. He says it is his “one thing” he isn't ready to give up. Should he still get baptized?

I'm so glad you wrote! What's your understanding of what it means to be baptized? It is an outward symbol of an inward reality: that he has trusted in Christ, is now a member of His family, and wants to testify that a very important change has happened inside.

It doesn't mean he has his act together. <smile>

You can read all the way through the New Testament and not find any specifications for being baptized other than deciding to follow Christ, and no reasons *not* to be baptized. As your husband walks with the Lord and starts to realize that the abundant life starts with Jesus living inside him, He will provide a different way of viewing getting drunk. But that's going to take time, and I want to encourage you, one wife to another, to let the Lord be in charge of the timing of that dealing with that behavior. There are reasons he gets drunk that God is fully aware of, and will deal with at the right time.

Please, give your husband a break. . . and a baptism party! ☐ Celebrate this great, great news. . . and let the Holy Spirit be the Holy Spirit. He knows all about your husband's drinking. You pray, and trust God.

Hope you find this helpful.

Sue Bohlin

* * *

After reading this article on our website, this wise wife wrote to me:

Twenty-six years ago, my husband and I started going to a local church sometimes. God had been calling us to Him for some time, and at that point I fully committed my life to Him. My husband was born again when a man from church took the time to befriend my husband and explain the gospel to him. My husband continued drinking (I didn't only because I was pregnant).

I didn't say anything to him, but he later told me that he started hiding from me how much he was drinking because he was feeling guilty. One day our pastor stopped by with his family when they were out for a bike ride, and my husband offered him a beer! I was mortified; I didn't know much about being a Christian, but I did know that it wasn't socially acceptable to offer a pastor a beer!

Thank God for that pastor, though, and the people of that church who welcomed us and took a genuine interest in us. The pastor graciously declined with "no thanks" but continued visiting and didn't make my husband feel like a leper or give him a lecture. Not too long after that, an elder of the church encouraged us to start coming to Sunday School Bible study classes instead of just worship services. Because my husband felt comfortable with the pastor, he talked to him about this. He told our pastor, "I want to come to church more often, but I like drinking beer and don't want to stop, and I don't want

people to judge me.” The pastor told him, “Whether or not you should be drinking beer is between you and God, and no one at church is going to say anything to you about it. Don’t let that thought keep you from coming to church or growing closer to God.”

So we started going to Bible studies and became more involved in the church. Within a few months, just after our son was born, my husband quit drinking. It happened this way: My husband later told me that he had been feeling the conviction that he shouldn’t be drinking and he knew that he didn’t want his son to grow up like he had, with an alcoholic father. But he liked beer so much that he kept ignoring the thoughts. One day when my husband was in the garage, he felt that conviction so strongly that he knelt down on the floor there in the garage and surrendered himself completely to God, and vowed not to drink again. He quit that very day, and God helped him keep that vow. He came into the house to find me, very emotional, and told me what had happened.

I can’t take credit for being wise enough not to say anything to him about drinking; that had to be the Lord’s work. But I do think that because I didn’t say anything to him about it, the struggle stayed between my husband and God and didn’t become a power struggle between him and me. I know enough now to know that a wife should not attempt to be her husband’s conscience on matters such as this; God calls her to love and honor her husband.

God does not always use the same timeline or the same routes with everyone, and not everyone is equally responsive to God. But that woman can be sure that God IS working with her husband, just as He is working with her, and that His Spirit is dealing with anything He wants her husband to change. She can trust God enough to leave the conviction to Him, and to guide her in what her responses should be in difficult decisions (such as if he wants her to drink with him) and how to honor her husband without compromising her beliefs. I will

pray for this woman and pray that her husband will respond to the Lord and fully commit his life to Him.

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“Is It OK For a Pastor to Hit His Adult Daughter?”

Is it right for a pastor to hit his 22-year-old daughter? And not feel the need to apologize? Even if it's because it was first a heated argument? Is it right?

Oh _____. I am so sorry! No ma'am, it is NOT right for any man to hit any woman for any reason. It is an abuse of his strength and an abuse of his God-given position of protector of his family.

When we are speaking on [“Guys Are From Mars, Girls Are From Venus”](#) (gender differences), my husband Ray always reads this quote from Stu Weber in his book *Tender Warrior*:

“Let me put it a little more bluntly—if you lay a hand on a woman, you should be shot, okay? A woman was made to be provided for, protected, and cared for. A man was made to be a provider, protector, and care-giver. Nothing is more pitiful than a man forfeiting his masculinity or a woman her femininity by transgressing the created order.”

I would hope that there would be healthy accountability in place in your church that you could go to the elders of the church and ask for help. I would put it like this, taking my cue from Abigail's respectful confrontation of David when he was angry and ready for blood (1 Samuel 25): “Dad, it's not right for you to use your strength to hurt me. I'm going to

ask you one time to please don't do that again. When you treat me so disrespectfully, you are not being the man of God that I know you want to be. I want to help you be the godly father I know you want to be, so if you ever hit me again I just want you to know I'm going to the elders to ask them to help you with your anger and lack of self-control."

That, of course, would infuriate him, because people doing shameful things don't want to be forced to face it. And it's possible that in the culture of your church or your community, men don't think there's anything wrong with hitting women they're related to. If that's the case, you might want to think about finding a safer place to live.

But the bottom line is no, it's not right, and I'm sorry you even had to ask.

Sue Bohlin

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“Are There Biblical Solutions to the Issues Self-Help Gurus Address?”

People like Wayne Dyer offer some interesting answers to everyday problems, like moving on with your life, overcoming excuses, etc. Are there Biblical answers like these self-help gurus offer?

Drs. John Townsend and Henry Cloud, writing and speaking partners who wrote the *Boundaries* books, are exceptionally wise men whose perspective is drenched in scripture and

biblical thinking. In fact, Dr. Townsend earned a Th.M. from Dallas Theological Seminary, which means he REALLY knows his theology. Between the two of them, who have written a number of books together and separately, there is a wide range of “self-help” resources, but which are really about plugging God’s principles into our needs. (And then, the reader discovers, it’s actually about plugging *ourselves* into God and His principles—first things first!) I would especially recommend *Boundaries: When to Say Yes, How to Say No to Take Control of Your Life* (Townsend and Cloud) and *Changes That Heal* (Cloud). Here’s a link to their website: www.cloudtownsend.com

Hope you find this helpful.

Sue Bohlin

Addendum: My colleague at Probe, Heather Zeiger, sent this follow-up email:

Just for reference to the Biblical Self-help question. One can be encouraged that many of the Puritans have written on these self-help issues, so Christian authors have actually been publishing in this area for a while. I wouldn’t necessarily direct someone to the Puritans right off the bat, but I think it is encouraging that back in the 1600s, Jonathan Edwards wrote about procrastination (one of his selected sermons in book form is entitled “Procrastination or The Sin and Folly of Depending on Future Time”) and about those things (affections) that we love more than we should. I’m reading John Owens’ *Of the Mortification of Sin in Believers*. Basically he applies it with addictions. He wrote in the 1700’s.

Two recent books written by psychologists/counselors also with theology degrees are *How People Change* by Timothy S. Lane and Paul D. Tripp, which is the modern-day version of Jonathan Edwards’ *Religious Affections* – learning how to get over the gospel of works and accept grace. And deals with how people

handle when tough things happen in life and what they turn to in order to cope. The other book that is really good is *When People are Big and God is Small* by Edward T. Welch, which is all about people-pleasing and co-dependency.

The theme in all these books is exactly what you said in your email – not some program or steps to make yourself better in the world's eyes, but understanding what God thinks of these things and how through Him we can be free.

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“Is Hypnosis Spiritually Safe for Childbirth Pain Control?”

My friend, a Christian for about four years, is a doula [a trained childbirth assistant and labor coach]. One of her recent clients has expressed an interest in hypno-birthing as a method for laboring. I expressed my concerns to my friend and she assures me that it is harmless. She says that you are in total control and place yourself in the hypnotic state where you would not do anything that goes against what you believe. I'm not so sure that I believe hypnotism is harmless; can you help me?

According to the trustworthy book *Mind Games: Exposing Today's Psychics, Frauds, and False Spiritual Phenomena* by André Kole and Jerry MacGregor, hypnosis can have legitimate medical benefits such as pain control, weight loss and smoking cessation. They report that your friend's assurance that a person undergoing hypnosis can't be forced to do anything that goes against one's will or one's beliefs is valid.

They explain that hypnosis is not truly understood and cannot be empirically proven (i.e., there is no brain wave difference for those undergoing hypnosis). There is no clear definition of a trance, and no one knows how it works. They say,

“The simplest way to understand hypnosis is to regard it as a state of mind characterized by increased suggestibility—the acceptance of an idea without being critical of it. It is a method of bypassing the conscious mind. Whatever is presented to the subconscious mind, under certain conditions, may be automatically accepted and acted upon.”

The power of hypnosis, then, is faith. The person being hypnotized must want to be hypnotized, they must trust the hypnotist, and they have to be consciously open to whatever is suggested to them. They have faith in the hypnotist and in the process, and willingly submit to it. Kule and MacGregor say, “In one sense, when you submit to hypnosis, you actually give control of yourself and your mind to another individual. Therefore you should be extremely cautious about who you submit yourself to.” Since we are not to be controlled by anything except the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18), the “green light” to use hypnosis would have to include accountability to make sure that the hypnotist, for laboring or anything else, is honorable in their intentions and in their practice.

Hope you find this helpful.

Sue Bohlin

Posted Apr. 2009

“Did I Commit the Unpardonable Sin?”

I have read your answers to others who fear they have committed the unpardonable sin, but they do not seem to satisfy my fears for the same. I was raised in Christian home and had Bible teaching all of my life. In my junior year of high school, I had a conversation with a boy about the virgin birth of Christ.

For some foolish reason, I had never “caught on” to what it really meant that the baby Jesus was put into Mary’s body by the Holy Spirit. My words to him were, “Mary and Joseph had to do something.” To which he replied, “But, I thought that was the whole idea, that they didn’t do “anything?”” (referring to fornication)

Is this denial of the work of the Holy Spirit? Is this the unpardonable sin? I stated to him that Jesus was the Son of God, but I just didn’t understand how it could have come to pass without “something”(fornication) taking place. I know you have probably never heard of someone being so ignorant of the scriptures, but it had never been explained to me fully.

I am 40 years old, and I still struggle with this. I have discussed it with my husband ONLY, and he assures me it is not blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. I fear to not know and I fear to know, but I need someone’s honest opinion who has no attachment to me. Please be frank, it is hindering my life and possibly the reflection of the church to the world. If I cannot be saved, then God does not need me around hurting the reputation of the saved. If I am, I need to get past this so I can bring Him glory. I would appreciate your honesty.

I promise, you did not blaspheme the Holy Spirit, which involves a hardness of heart and a wicked unbelief which you

did not and do not have, *or you wouldn't be asking*. When you were in high school, during that momentous conversation, you were just asking the same question Mary had when Gabriel came to her: "How can this be?"

Do you have children? Let's assume you do. Don't you make all kinds of allowances for them because they're kids and not adults? Especially when they were very young?

Why would your heavenly Father be any different? He completely understood then, as now, that it just took you awhile to catch on to the breathtakingly miraculous. He doesn't hold it against you that you were young and still working through this "God stuff"!! <smile> He fully understands and LAVISHES grace on you.

I send this with a prayer that God lets you hear His loving and tender voice in your spirit saying, "She's right, beloved _____. . . just relax in My love, and let go of this doubt once and for all."

I truly hope you find this helpful.

Sue Bohlin

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**“How Should I Respond to
‘It’s All Right to Do
Anything as Long as It**

Doesn't Hurt Anybody'?"

I have a question about some of the new age mentality that I have encountered in the more recent months. As apologetics is a bit of a hobby for me, I love learning what other people think and believe. It seems that as I ask around more and more, people are always saying the same thing. In more words they always seem to say "I can do whatever I want as long as it doesn't hurt anybody." I know that this is by no means a new or uncommon answer, but it seems to be growing to me. Usually I address this with a series of questions which will cause them to backtrack and correct themselves, something like this: It is not all right to hurt people? Do you count as a person? Are you allowed to hurt yourself? Is emotional harm all right? How did you determine that it was not all right to hurt people? Who enforces this rule? Are you making a connection between church and state? How did the world come into existence? And so on. My philosophy is that sooner or later they will be forced to acknowledge that their view is full of holes, yet it appears to me that this way doesn't work. I actually should have realized this sooner, because I now realize that those people really do not know what they believe, and that their choices are based on emotions. Thus, I am asking you how you would suggest responding to the view that "It is all right to do anything as long as it doesn't hurt anybody"?

I'm afraid you've hit the wall of the skeptical postmodern mentality. When a person doesn't believe anyone can know what is true about anything, and adopts the "true for me" mentality, the results are an amazing batch of contradictory ideas and no reason to try to make them consistent. People toss together beliefs according to what seems right at the moment, changing beliefs like changing outfits; ideas are subject to fashion just as clothes are. After trying to reason with people who think as you have described, you want to bang

someone's head against the wall – theirs or your own (I don't suggest either!).

Because on the level of ideas contradictory beliefs can be held with such amazing ease, one typically cannot convince a person on that level. I say "typically" because some can be convinced at least that their ideas are inconsistent and that that is a problem. You just have to try drawing the person into a conversation and see what happens. For many it takes real life situations to drive home the point.

I recommend you find a copy of Francis Schaeffer's *The God Who Is There* and focus especially on the last section: "Speaking Historic Christianity Into the Twentieth-Century Climate." He deals with this issue there. One of his main points is that any religion or philosophy which isn't Christian must result in some kind of inconsistency in a person's life because we were made by God to live in God's universe. False beliefs put us at odds with the universe and with ourselves. So, for instance, a person who says there is no difference between good and evil will be quite upset if you pour boiling water on him. He might even say you were wrong! Of course, I don't recommend actually pulling off such stunts to prove a point! What one can do, however, is gently (I Pe. 3:15) question a person about an inconsistency between what the person says she believes and how she acts. It's like turning a light on and letting the other person see the problem for herself.

One thing we apologists easily forget is tact. One person defined it as "the ability to make a point without sticking someone with it." Work toward encouragement and very subtle enlightenment rather than conquering in your manner. Be committed to truth, but also be committed to people and to showing the attractiveness of truth to them rather than whipping them with it.

If you have any questions after reading Schaeffer's book (or at least the above-mentioned segment of it) write to me

directly.

Rick Wade

See Also:

[As Long As It Doesn't Hurt Anyone Else](#) by Rick Wade

“Where Can I Get Christian Movie Reviews?”

There are two excellent Web sites that provide Christian reviews of movies:

1. Movieguide

www.movieguide.org

2. Crosswalk Movie Reviews

www.crosswalk.com/fun/movies/

There is also a conservative movie review Web site you might want to check: www.screenit.com

Kerby Anderson

Probe Ministries

“What’s the Difference Between Gambling and Investing?”

Can you explain the difference between gambling and investing?
Thanks in advance.

Thank you for your e-mail and question about the differences between gambling and investing. There are a number of Christian authors who have addressed this issue (Norm Geisler, Tony Evans, Gary North, etc.).

Briefly let me say that there are some similarities, and there are people who get addicted to high risk investing just like gambling. So I would acknowledge there are some similarities between the two.

But the key issue is that there are some striking differences. Investors research an investment with the goal of lowering the risks and making a wise investment. Gambling is all about risk and the odds cannot be lowered by further research (except for those who can modify the odds of blackjack by card counting or something like that).

The goal of investing is to build up a company and portfolio. Even if it’s done selfishly, it still can have a positive effect on the company and the economy. Gambling takes money out of the capital economy. It doesn’t contribute to job creation, etc. As I argue in [my transcript on gambling](#), gambling actually hurts a local economy and increases social costs (abuse, neglect, bankruptcy).

Most investing is done with discretionary income and with certain limits (amount of stock that can be bought on margin, debt load allowed by a lender, etc.). Most gambling is not done with discretionary income. Money that should go for food,

rent, clothing is often risked in a “get-rich-quick” scheme.

So while I would acknowledge that investing and gambling have some similarities, the differences make the difference. If you are interested, I would encourage you to read some additional material by some of the authors I mentioned.

Thanks for writing.

Kerby Anderson
Probe Ministries